

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4-9, 11 and 13-15 remain pending in the present application. Claims 3, 10 and 12 are hereby cancelled. Claim 1 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3, indicated as allowable by the Examiner in the outstanding Office Action, as well as to provide appropriate antecedent basis for the subject matter of claim 9. Claim 9 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 10, now cancelled. Claim 11 is amended to reflect the particulars of Figures 5 and 6, described at page 6, lines 25-35 of the specification. No new matter is added.

Restriction Requirement

The claims have been restricted to the following groups: Group I, claims 1-8, directed to a process of making meltblown fibers; Group II, claims 9 and 10, directed to nonwoven fabrics; and Group III, claims 11-15, directed to extrusion dies. Applicants acknowledge their election, with traverse, of the claims of Group I for prosecution at this time.

Applicants traverse the Examiner's reasons for restriction as set forth in paragraphs 3-5 of the outstanding Office Action.

The Examiner argues that the meltblown fibers of the invention of Group I cannot make the nonwoven fabric of the invention of Group II (paragraph 3). Applicants respectfully submit that the specification clearly indicates that the process of Group I is intended to make the nonwoven fabrics of Group II. In this regard, the Examiner's attention is directed to the specification at page 8, lines 19, wherein Applicants indicate that the fibers made by the disclosed process are deposited onto a collecting surface, which would thus form a nonwoven fabric according to claim 9.

The Examiner further argues that the inventions of Groups I and III are distinct because "the apparatus as claimed can be used to practice another and materially different process such as a process of making spunbond fibers" (paragraph 4). Applicants believe that the present amendment to claim 1 to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3 clearly negates the Examiner's suggestion, since spunbond fabrics are not made of broken fibers. Likewise, the clear language of claim 11 indicates that the extrusion die is "for meltblowing molten polymers" and that the inclusion of gas jets lateral to the extrusion orifices makes clear that the claimed die is not useful for spunbonding.

The Examiner continues in arguing that the inventions of Groups II and III are distinct "because the apparatus of invention III cannot make the nonwoven fabric product of invention II" (paragraph 5). Applicants traverse and respectfully submit that the specification as a whole refutes the Examiner's contention; i.e. it is clear that

the apparatus of Group III is specifically designed to enable production of the nonwoven fabrics of Group II.

In short, Applicants cannot grasp the logic of the Examiner's restriction requirement, since it is clear that the apparatus of Group III is intended to conduct the meltblowing process of Group I to form the nonwoven fabrics of Group II. Withdrawal of the restriction requirement is respectfully requested.

Objections to the Specification

Applicants believe that the Examiner's objections to the title and abstract, expressed in paragraphs 9-11 of the outstanding Office Action, are moot in view of the amendment submitted herewith.

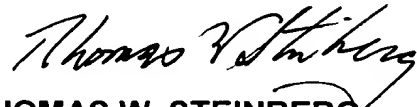
Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Yu

Claims 1 and 4-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Yu (WO 99/48668). Applicants traverse this basis for rejection and respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal thereof.

Applicants submit that the amendment to claim 1 to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3, indicated as allowable by the Examiner in paragraph 14 of the outstanding Office Action, should overcome the stated rejection. Withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of the claims is requested.

In view of the foregoing, allowance of the above-referenced application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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